

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12

AID-20 RSR-01 /098 W

----- 042034

R 100900Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY KABUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4099

C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 5035

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AF

SUBJ: POSSIBLE POSTPONEMENT AFGHAN ELECTIONS

1. FROM VARIETY SOURCES EMBASSY HAS GROWING BUT STILL UNCONFIRMED IMPRESSION THAT PRIMIN SHAFIQ PLANS EITHER TO POSTPONE OR CANCEL ELECTIONS CONSTITUTIONALLY SCHEDULED FOR SEPTEMBER. EXECUTIVE-JUDICIARY DEADLOCK OVER MEMBERSHIP OF ELECTION SUPERVISORY COMMISSIONS (REPORTED KABUL A-20) REMAINS UNSOLVED, ALTHOUGH AT LEAST ONE SUPREME COURT JUSTICE HAS TOLD EMBOFFS THAT ANNOUNCEMENT FORTHCOMING ON PROBLEM AND ELECTIONS MAY STILL BE HELD ON TIME AFTER VERY ABBREVIATED ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN.

2. SINCE PASSAGE JUNE 14 CONSTITUTIONAL DEADLINE FOR OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF ELECTORAL MROCEDURES, GROWING NUMBER LOWER HOUSE MP'S (WHO BEGAN CAMPAIGNING EARLY) HAVE BEEN LURED BACK TO KABUL TO COMPLETE QUORUM AND TAKE ACTION ON THREE ITEMS PENDING LEVISLATNZN AT "URGENT" REQUEST OF GOVERNMENT. THESE INCLUDE (A) TEN FOREIGN LOAND (PASSED JULY 2, REPORTED KABUL 4918); (B) AUTHORITY FOR GOVERNMENT TO NEGOTIATE LOANS WITH BI-AND MULTILATERAL DONORS FOR 47 DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS (PASSED JULY 8); AND (C) RGA ORDINARY AND DEVELOPMENT BUDGETS FOR CURRENT FISCAL YEAR (DEBATE CURRENTLY UNDERWAY).

3. SPECTER OF EITHER POSTPONED OR CANCELLED ELECTIONS WAS OBVIOUS TOOL EMPLOYED BY SHAFIQ GOVERNMENT TO CAJOLE DEPUTIES  
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INTO RETURNING KABUL; BUT WHETHER GOVERNMENT REALLY INTENDS

TO "DO AWAY" WITH PARLIAMENT FOR A TIME REMAINS AS YET UNANSWERABLE QUESTION. ASSUMING BUDGET PASSES WITHIN NEXT WEEK OR SO, SHAFIQ GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE SET STAGE FOR POSSIBLE RULE WITHOUT PARLIAMENT FOR AT LEAST A YEAR. THIS DEVELOPMENT HAS ALSO FED ALTERNATIVE SPECULATION THAT GOVERNMENT EITHER INTENDS (A) TO HOLD ELECTIONS ON TIME BUT TO SEVERELY CURTAIL PERIOD OF CAMPAIGNING TO ENABLE GOVERNMENT TO GET FRIENDLY CANDIDATES ELECTED, OR (B) TO POSTPONE ELECTIONS AND CONVENE LOI JIRGAH TO REVIEW AND PERHAPS AMEND 1964 CONSTITUTION.

4. COMMENT: WHILE LATTER OPTION NOT YET CONSIDERED STRONG POSSIBILITY, IT KNOWN THAT PRIMIN SHAFIQ IS UNCOMFORTABLE WITH PROVISIONS ARTICLE 92 WHICH PERMITS LOWER HOUSE IN ITS NEXT TERM TO CENSURE GOVERNMENT BY SIMPLE MAJORITY VOTE. NO ONE, EITHER IN GOVERNMENT OR PARLIAMENT, CLAIMS TO KNOW FOR CERTAIN WHAT NEXT STEP WILL BE. BRITISH AMB. DRINKALL TOLD CHARGE HE HAD CLEAR IMPRESSION AFTER MEETING LATE JUNE WITH SHAFIQ THAT POSTPONEMENT NOW INEVITABLE. SINCE CONSTITUTIONAL DEADLINE FOR ANNOUNCEMENT OF ELECTIONS NOW PAST, MOST OBSERVERS AGREE ROYAL DECREE REQUIRED TO CLARIFY ISSUE. WITH KING SCHEDULED TO RECUPERATE FROM EYE TREATMENT IN ITALY FOR ANOTHER FORT-NIGHT, IT THEREFORE UNLIKELY ANYONE NOW IN KABUL WILL SOON RESOLVE THIS CURRENTLY FAVORITE TOPIC OF KABUL SOCIAL GATHERINGS.  
LEWIS

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